



Winter 2008 Vol.6, No.3

THIS ISSUE

This issue features this summer's Apron Show, and the stories of Helena Klippenstein and the village mechanic.

Come & visit

Tours of *Neuberghthal, A Mennonite Street Village*, are available upon request.

Call ahead to make arrangements

We also take special requests for other types of tours and events. Please call or e-mail us for details on how we can accommodate your group.

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Neuberghthal

Notes



The d'8 Schtove display in this past summer's Apron show, in the Friesen Housebarn.

The Apron Cover-up

By Rose Hildebrand

In medieval times aprons were worn by men, like the blacksmith, the baker, the barber, the butcher, etc. They were worn to protect their other clothing. Historically, women also wore aprons to protect their clothing from messy work. Most people had few clothes and laundry was grueling work, so aprons were important protection.

Most aprons become meaningful because of the stories they tell, the eras they represent, or the feelings they evoke in us. Aprons are direct ties to our personal and collective memories. They link women of previous generations; a connection from one generation to the next. Aprons are symbols of family and motherhood, of protection and warmth, of a bond between parent and child. They help us remember home and family the way it used to be, creating a special bond with the past.

Early pioneer women tried to make life as pleasant as they could for their families, in spite of great hardships and unrelenting work. They didn't have water on tap, gathering rainwater in summer and melting snow or ice in winter to do laundry. Water had to be heated and fuel was not readily available. Meals were cooked from scratch, using her own garden grown products, or the dried and stored or canned products. Women usually did all the milking, churning butter and making cottage cheese. They also shared with the farm work, like stacking sheaves and hay. Women made all the clothes for the family, also the bedding. There was mending and darn-

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ing to do too. In all this one can see the practical use of aprons.

Flour sacks were very valuable in those days. Money was scarce and the sacks were used to sew shirts and underwear adorned with the letters and symbols of advertising. They also dyed the sacks and made dresses and aprons. In later years, the sacks were bleached and fancy embroidered aprons, tea towels, and quilts and many other uses were made of them.

Aprons had many uses, not only to protect garments. If you hold up the corners, you could make a sack to carry wood chips, kindling, vegetables and fruit from the garden, eggs little chicks or kittens. They could be used as a pot holder or for wiping hands or a perspiring brow while cooking or hoeing, or wiping children's tears or noses. Shy children used moth-



er's apron to hide under. Flies were shooed off a cooling pie, or a wave of the apron signaled the family it was to come and eat. At times, it was used as a maternity apron; a "cover up."

It was probably in the early 1030s that the village women started a Sewing Circle or "Naehverein". They gathered in the afternoon for "faspa". In later years, the younger women gathered in the evenings. They would sew, embroider and crochet, make quilts and other items, and sell them at an auc-

tion sale with the money to go to missions. They also served at weddings and other functions. For these occasions they wore matching aprons. These aprons survived years of service and some of them were on display at the "Apron Show" during the Sunflower Festival. *N*

The Helena Klippenstein Story



Mrs Helen Klippenstein

My mother always wore a dark colored dress with long, tight, lined sleeves, and she wore a black apron to protect it. I don't know how she wasn't overcome by heat while cooking plum jam on the Spoaheat in the summer kitchen. It could be very hot in the heat of summer. I remember hiding behind her apron during thunder storms.

On Sundays my sisters and I always had to wear white aprons. The Tweeback, cheese and jam of Sunday faspa could be served only if you wore a white apron. One of

my aprons had pleats that had to be re-pressed every time it had been washed.

When I was 17 years old my mother died and left me responsible for the household chores. I also had to care for my invalid sister. I made myself some sturdy gardening aprons with huge patch pockets. Those pockets could carry lot of peas, beans, radishes and even melons back to the house. The aprons got to be very dirty though.

My husband and I were often invited to hog butchering bees, sometimes on a number of consecutive days. I always had to wash my butchering apron in the evening so that it would be clean and dry by the time we'd leave for the next days' bee.

Butchering chickens was also a messy job. I remember the day I helped my sister with chicken butchering. My job was to chop the heads off at the edge of the gutter in the barn. My first attempt was unsuccessful because the hatchet was too dull. I was really spooked when that chicken looked up at me with its' defiant beady eyes, and I decided never to help again if I couldn't be provided with a sharp hatchet. *N*

A Tribute to the Village Mechanic

By Rose Hildebrand

Mr. Peter Gerbrandt was the village mechanic and it seemed like he could fix anything mechanical. He knew how motors were supposed to run. The farmers in the village were very fortunate to a mechanic so close by.

They lived in a small house at the south end of the village on the east side. His wife was not well a lot of the time. They had four children; three girls and one son. Their son, Jacob, picked up the trade from his father and became the next village mechanic.

In those days it was hard to make a living and their days were long, filled with hard work. It was not uncommon to see him coming out of the garage, wiping his greasy hands with a cloth. Most times there would be a tractor or some motor in the garage that needed fixing now.

Because their house was just north of the village church, it was convenient for them also to become the caretakers of the church. *N*



Peter Gerbrandt's yard



Peter Gerbrandt's children

NHF Update



Thank you to all who made the summer exhibition “The Neuberghal Naeferein and the Art of the Kitchen Cover-up” so well-received—from gathering artifacts, sharing stories, organizing, making & serving food & baking bread. Well over 1000 people from many parts of Manitoba, Canada, and internationally, descended on the Friesen Housebarn Interpretive Centre. Approximately \$6000 was taken in through donations and ticket sales.

See more photographs of the Cover-Up on page 4

More photographs of the Cover-Up



Cemetery News

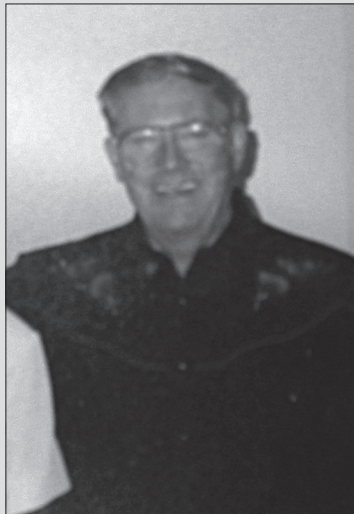
Just an update on what's been happening at the cemetery this year. Cottonwood trees have been planted on the east side. A maple tree was planted by the driveway with future plans for a seating area under that tree. A row of headstones was straightened and markers were put down for future rows. The regular maintenance of weekly mowing, weed control, trimming, filling in holes, and pruning was done throughout the summer.

Many headstones and grave sites are in need of repair. This is the responsibility of family members. Some headstones have been redone and they look great. Fall is

a good time to check on family grave sites because Altona Memorials has time during the winter months to refinish and restore the headstones. The information on these old headstones is important, for it tells the story of the past to the future generations of our village.

Comings & Goings

John H. Klippenstein (b. December 20, 1928, d. July 18, 2008) grew up in Neubergthal together with four brothers. His Dad owned the store and his mother and the boys helped wherever it was needed. John was a good hockey player and in winter he spent a lot of time at the local rink. John married his childhood sweetheart, Ruth, in 1951, and they had three children. John was a loving husband, and a devoted father and grandfather.



They lived in Winnipeg for 27 years, and then in Dufresne for 14 years. Here he was a carpenter, plumber, electrician, and whatever else was needed to build a house. They moved to Winnipeg Beach to retire. Because they were needed by family in Neubergthal, they moved there and have spent the last 12 years there. John was a



man who enjoyed fixing things and has renovated and sold numerous homes. He was also one who knew how to repair cars. The one thing he did not know how to work with was computers. In Winnipeg he worked for Manitoba Sugar and was a long-haul trucker for Reimer Express.

John also loved to brommel the Brommtopp and sing with the other village boys at New Years.

His nimble fingers, easy smile, and steady rhythm will be missed.

John and Ruth enjoyed getting out of the cold in winter, and travelled to Hawaii, Jamaica, and Arizona for many winters. He experienced ill health the last three years.